

6.0 NEXT STEPS

The development of the Regional Transit Action Plan is a two-phase process. The first phase has been to conduct the public involvement activities; assess transit needs; develop and calibrate the sketch planning tool; and identify, test and evaluate potential transit projects, policies and services. The second phase will refine the Draft Concept Plan and develop the final Regional Transit Action Plan.

This chapter describes the refinement of the Draft Concept Plan that will take place over the next several months. During this period, each of the projects, service and policies will undergo rigorous testing and evaluation using ARC's regional travel demand model. The final RTAP will then present Finance and Phasing Plans that lay out how the plan can be funded and implemented.

6.1 REFINE THE PLAN

The refinement of the Draft Concept Plan will focus on testing and evaluation of the plan elements using the regional travel demand model. Unlike the sketch planning tool that relied on a static highway network and generated transit-only ridership results, the regional travel demand models have the capability to measure the interactions between highway and transit networks, to project highway congestion (and its mitigation) and forecast air quality impacts. In addition, the regional travel demand model will produce results that are consistent with those of other regional transportation planning efforts.

During the refinement process, elements of the Draft Concept Plan will be evaluated against the goals, objectives and

performance measures adopted by the RTAP Project Advisory Committee.

During this refinement process, some poor-performing projects may drop out, others may be modified to optimize their performance, and still other new projects may be introduced. The models will produce measures that fully describe the performance of the transit and highway systems and resultant air quality impacts.

6.2 FINANCE THE PLAN

How much will the RTAP plan cost to construct and operate? What local, state and federal funding sources are available? Will additional revenue be required? Whereas the Draft Concept Plan was not financially constrained, the final Regional Transit Action Plan must be financially feasible.

During the next phase of the project, the RTAP Team will develop reliable capital and operating cost estimates for the projects and services featured in the plan. Next, current local, state and federal funding sources will be researched and funding trends will be established for future years, given current funding levels. Finally, potential funding sources will be identified for any funding shortfall.

6.3 COMMUNICATE THE PLAN

The extensive public involvement program established in the first phase of the project will be continued through the second phase. GRTA will continue to seek out the issues and concerns that individual citizens have about the plan, and respond to those

issues in a positive way. GRTA will also continue to rely on the valuable participation of the Project Advisory Committee to generate new ideas and provide direction to the RTAP Team.

Finally, GRTA recognizes that it is not sufficient to simply prepare a plan, particularly one that greatly expands transportation choices and encourages the region's residents and workers to make use of these choices. In order to change travel behavior, GRTA will also have to inform and educate the region about the RTAP and the benefits that can result from it.

6.4 IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

In past years, the Atlanta region has been roundly criticized for developing transportation plans that couldn't be implemented because of insufficient funding, political differences, or lack of a project sponsor. How will the Regional Transit Action Plan be different?

First, the RTAP Plan must be financially feasible. But equally important, the RTAP Plan must lay out priorities for future projects and services that are realistic and supportable by its planning partners, particularly project sponsors. Results of the regional travel demand models will help to establish priority corridors and projects. Clearly, implementation of the RTAP Plan will rest not just on GRTA, but on all of its planning partners in the Atlanta region. The RTAP Plan will also examine organizational issues that will help to establish responsibilities between GRTA and area transit agencies and other jurisdictions.

6.5 MONITOR THE PLAN

The final step, and in some ways the most important step, in the planning process is monitoring the plan. Monitoring can and should occur on two levels:

- ✓ Is the RTAP Plan being implemented as it was intended?
- ✓ How effective is the RTAP Plan in achieving its intended results?

The second phase of the RTAP project will develop a monitoring program that establishes a mechanism for tracking implementation of the RTAP Plan. In addition, quantifiable performance targets (e.g., number of annual transit boardings, transit mode share for both the region and specific corridors) will be determined so that the effectiveness of the Plan can be monitored on a regular basis.